

Using the Capital Regional District's Harbours Atlas for planning, managing and restoring harbour areas in Victoria, British Columbia

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The Harbours Atlas is a comprehensive, web-based information and mapping tool for Portage Inlet, Gorge Waterway, Victoria Harbour, Esquimalt Harbour and Esquimalt Lagoon. Designed to promote informed, responsible and sustainable land and water use decisions, it provides information to (1) assist with environmental management and stewardship, (2) support actions to protect against degradation and (3) improve the effectiveness of efforts to restore and enhance harbour and watershed ecosystems. The Harbours Atlas is based on a systematic inventory of the subtidal, intertidal and backshore features of the harbours and is accessible via an Internet mapping (ArcIMS) site. Users are able to retrieve ecological and geographic data from over 70 layers of spatial information including harbour vegetation, marine fauna, substrates, sensitive shoreline habitats, seasonal bird use and density, watershed information and underwater videos. Users from the public, government, environmental and community groups, First Nations and the development community may utilize this powerful mapping tool to identify sensitive areas, to help visualize the potential impact of planned development activities, and to flag areas which may require special attention for protection or restoration. This paper will introduce the Harbours Atlas and discuss its role in planning for, managing and restoring the harbour and watershed areas.